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NHTSA & GM Crash Death Problems -- Bigger Than We Know

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What the Public Does Not Yet Know Can Kill Us

GM and NHTSA still know a lot more than the public knows.

* GM and NHTSA know that the number of all fatalities in crashes involving GM vehicles in the year 2012 was 11,212 people in the U.S. That amounts to about 30 Americans dying of crash injuries each day involving GM vehicles.

* GM and NHTSA know that the number of all fatalities in crashes with GM vehicles involved in the year 2011 was 10,047 people in the U.S.

* GM and NHTSA know that the number of all occupant fatalities in GM vehicles in the year 2012 was 7,171 people in the U.S. That amounts to about 20 Americans dying of crash injuries each day in GM vehicles.

* GM and NHTSA know that the number of all occupant fatalities in GM vehicles in the year 2011 was 7,094 people in the U.S.

Note: Not all are defect related fatalities. But not all GM fatalities are investigated for defect involvement by NHTSA. NHTSA could and should certainly publish the numbers and rates of all fatalities by make and model. Publication would help identify defects and incentivize auto companies to compete on safety performance in the real world.

GM Airbag Non Deployment Crashes and NHTSA Inaction

The growing public scrutiny of GM and NHTSA shows that NHTSA knew about GM airbag failures to deploy in 2007 but failed to protect. And NHTSA claiming ignorance and blaming GM is not persuasive in view of evidence to the contrary. <http://www.cbsnews.com/videos/gm-reported-airbag-problem-in-2007-documents-show/>

GM has collected data on crashes, instantly and automatically, via OnStar telemetry for more than a decade.

GM has data on frontal air bag non-deployment crashes that NHTSA knew about since 2007. In just one year (May 2005 – May 2006) GM collected data on "356 cases of "non deployment" frontal crashes where the predetermined thresholds for AACN in frontal impact were reached or exceeded." (GM Threshold = about 12.4 mph.)

GM data on frontal air bag non-deployment crashes was known to NHTSA and could have been analyzed and/or investigated for defects or for safety improvement.

Extrapolating 10 years of data from the 2005 GM data, there may have been nearly 3,500 frontal air bag non-deployment crashes that met the GM crash severity threshold for deployment. The public does not know whether NHTSA asked GM for that data for defects investigation or for safety improvement research or rulemaking purposes.

The above data on GM airbag non deployment crashes are from a paper written by then GM Safety head Robert Lange et al and published by NHTSA in 2007. Lange has been a leader in GM's product liability defense efforts for decades.

See <http://www-nrd.nhtsa.dot.gov/pdf/esv/esv20/07-0058-O.pdf>

Information the public does not yet have is how much OnStar crash data was transmitted to NHTSA, what was done with it and when?

The number of frontal non-deployment crashes in 2005 amounts to 356 cases, or an average each day of about 1 such non-deployment frontal crash, where airbags met the GM deployment threshold. Unknown is how many of these crashes GM and/or NHTSA investigated for defects, and outcomes since 2005.

In addition, 1,045 frontal crashes were recorded with airbag deployments in 2005. This GM data indicates that 1 out of 4 frontal crashes airbags did not deploy in crashes in which the GM airbag threshold for deployment was reached.

We Need Growing Public Scrutiny of Both GM and NHTSA

* GM Documents: Many Thousands now in Public Domain - See

<http://www.autosafety.org/document-binder-house-energy-commerce-oversight-and-investigations-subcommittee>

* NY Times Timeline of Who Knew What, When –

Will former GM CEO Dan Akerson and former NHTSA Administrator Strickland be called to testify? See

<http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2014/05/18/business/who-knew-what-when.html>

GM CEO Dan Akerson was aware of OnStar according to a recent article.

“Money, money, money!

Former General Motors CEO Dan Akerson negotiated a deal with AT&T in which the automaker receives \$20 for every vehicle owner who activates the service and a percentage of the fees paid to the wireless provider. This could be a big deal for the automaker for a couple of reasons. “

See <http://www.fool.com/investing/general/2014/05/18/could-this-move-revolutionize-general-motors-compa.aspx>

* NY Times Focus on GM Lawyers - See

<http://www.nytimes.com/2014/05/18/business/inquiries-at-gm-are-said-to-focus-on-its-legal-unit.html?hpw&rref=automobiles>

* NHTSA GM Consent Order – Slap on the wrist without even a NHTSA “Park it now” safety advisory to the public. See

<http://www.nytimes.com/2014/05/17/business/us-fines-general-motors-35-million-for-lapses-on-ignition-switch-defect.html?hp>

<http://www.cbsnews.com/news/sen-blumenthal-gms-fine-has-to-be-more-than-a-slap-on-the-wrist/>

<http://takingnote.blogs.nytimes.com/2014/05/19/35-million-for-g-m-thats-nothing/?hp&rref=opinion>

And now comedians are making fun of GM, what’s next? NHTSA?

<http://www.autoblog.com/2014/05/19/john-oliver-takes-gm-task-over-recalls-video/#continued>

The public is learning.

Will this bode well for safety and justice?

Maybe now GM will adopt the Volvo Vision Zero goal of zero deaths in or by a Volvo by the year 2020.

Maybe NHTSA will adopt a Vision Zero goal of zero deaths in or by a new model year vehicle beginning in 2020.